Engendering Peace Building In Ghana: The Role Of Queen Mothers In Traditional Conflict Resolution In Ga Traditional Areas

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Rufai Kilu Haruna
University of Professional Studies, Accra

Abstract: Several social audits conducted on Ga-traditional areas of Ghana, showed prevalence of disputes among the people, a situation that hinders accelerated socio-economic development. This constitutes a huge challenge. This study explores the role played by queen mothers in conflict resolution among the Ga people. Philosophically, the interpretivists’ perspectives of what constitutes an acceptable knowledge were adopted, using the qualitative approach. Data were analysed using thematic analysis technique to generate the results. The results confirmed universality and endemic nature of conflict. Types of conflict identified include: individual conflicts, group conflicts and sometimes communal conflicts. Causes of traditional conflicts were land related, chieftaincy and marital especially in polygamous homes. The study established that traditional conflicts affect socio-economic development, and conflicts bothering on marital and divorce lead to high incidence of single parents, a phenomenon that affect women and children badly. Majority of the conflict resolution roles were performed by the queen mothers. This justifies the significant and centrality of women in mediating conflict due to their good human relations. The work showed that the alternative dispute resolution method (ADR) was widely used and adopted in resolving traditional conflicts in the area. Though queen mothers have become catalyst in social conflict resolution, they are still challenged in competence and logistics. It is hereby recommended that their respective capacities be built and be well-resourced to enable them effectively use the alternative dispute resolution mechanism.

Keywords: gender, queen mothers, conflict resolution, traditional conflict
1. Introduction:

The concept of chieftaincy, a traditional institution characterized with pre-colonial roots remains an important institution of traditional governance in contemporary Ghana. It is the medium through which religious, cultural and socio-economic issues are communicated. It is an authority vested in custody of traditional functionaries such as chiefs, queen mothers, priests and priestesses (Odotei & Awedoba, 2006). The chieftaincy institution in Ga-Traditional area is similar to that of Chieftaincy in Akan States and other parts of Ghana. The chieftaincy institutions are developed into paramountcies since the 19th century, and the term queen mother is itself a colonial term, used to refer to female traditional political head. In Ga-tradition, queen mothers are addressed as manye. Central to the dynamics of Chieftaincy and to the identity of every individual member of the culture is the kinship system. Among the Ga-people, kinship system is organized along the patrilineal system, where the individual belong to the father’s decent group and if one is to be a king or queen mother, one must be descended from a royal ancestor through the father’s line (Nukunya, 2003). Queen mothers are often the sisters of the chiefs and from the same royal family.

In the face of development, queen mothers gather the women folk in their jurisdiction to rally behind development projects initiated for the community. They use their education, training, personal skills, resources, opportunities and roles in other spheres of life to promote the cause of leadership. They lobby to bring social amenities such as water, electricity and schools that benefit their respective communities. They are engaged in mobilizing income generating activities and initiating credit schemes that give the women capital. They do also train women in health and childcare (Odotei, 2006). Their role in community development has gained such a high profile and importance that even women achievers of high standing in communities outside the royal families are being installed as “manoryammanyε” which is translated as ‘development queen mothers’ (Nukunya, 2003). Queen mothers are very instrumental in organizing the various rites of passage, outdoing, puberty rites, customary rites, customary marriage and funerals. For instance during the puberty rites (dipo), they train adolescent girls in vocational skills to prepare them for living in the modern world as morally sensitive and good women, able to shoulder their responsibilities.

As part of their duties, Ga-queen mothers are involved in settlement of disputes which range from marital conflicts to inter family disputes. In Ga-traditional area, queen mothers perform important functions. They are repositories of knowledge and wisdom; therefore complicated
issues are being referred to them for counselling. Thus the concept of: “ayabiyoomo” ’that is, "Let us seek counselling from the old lady" evolved and still persists. The word yoomodoes not just mean an old lady, in this context it meant the Good Old Lady. She is referred to as "good" because she is always able to give very good counselling leading to amicable settlement of disputes (Abotchie, 2006).

Research shows that women possess certain characteristics vital for conflict resolution; they are sociable and accommodating, they use consensus decision making, they view power in relation to terms being shared and encourage productive approaches to conflict (Nukunya, 2003). Conflict resolution has always been an integral part of the traditional set up where natural leaders rely on norms, customs, traditions, myths and religious beliefs and practices to maintain law and order. Society has its own way of healing itself by providing the physical, the sociological, the economic, the religious and the ethical panaceas meant not only to moderate, control and possibly eradicate conflict situations. Traditional conflict resolution mechanism is a social capital, that is, the capability of social norms and customs to hold membersofagrouptogatherbyeffectivelysetting, facilitating and sustaining the terms of their relationship and facilitates collective action for achieving mutually beneficial goals (Nukunya, 2003). Women generally are richly endeared with the moral capacity to care and to embrace curiosity and complexity as they rise above the historic traps of dualistic divisions which drive the cycles of violence, and in this way, transcend orthodox gender stereotypes and the oppressive relations they spew. This is possible because women are more relational than men and as such view the same phenomenon differently.

A social analysis conducted on Ga-traditional area in 2011, showed a high number of social disputes including those related to chieftaincy, land, stealing and marital. Activities of traditional leaders in managing tool, family lands and other stool resources are worrying in the traditional area. Agents responsible for sale of lands do not account to the people and revenue so accrued from the sales not properly invested to ensure collective benefits of community members. In the mist of these, however, there is urgent need for accelerated socio-economic development in areas of education, health, welfare, better environment and good standard of living. This constitutes a huge challenge, resulting to numerous traditional conflict situations in the area. Indeed several studies have been carried out in the area centred on types of traditional conflicts, their causes and solutions, but not much has been researched into the role of the queen mothers in conflict resolution, hence a huge research gap that needs
to be filled. This study sets out to identify the types, causes and effects of traditional conflicts in Ga-traditional area; to explore the role played, processes and procedures adopted by the queen mothers in their capacity as custodians of customary law in conflict resolution among the Ga people; and to ascertain conflict resolution mechanisms adopted by the queen mothers in resolving conflicts in the area.

2. Historical and Constitutional Perspectives Of Chieftaincy In Ghana:

Chieftaincy is traceable from the period in the history of Gold Coast now Ghana. Before the arrival of the Portuguese in 1471, political life was organized and revolved around the natural leaders or heads of communities or chiefs (Brobbey, 2012). Chiefs/queen mothers provide administrative machinery for the day to day running of their traditional areas, and they also dispense justice. As socio-political and religious leaders, chiefs/queen mothers are believed to be sacred. Thus, the stool forms the symbol of reverence and unity of the people. Besides, the cultural life and religious rituals of chiefs/queen mothers are centred around the stool as is manifested on most occasions during traditional festivals. In the past, their roles included battles to defend or protect the people or acquire more wealth and slaves (Abotchie, 2006).

The importance of the chieftaincy institution cannot be overemphasized. In traditional Ghanaian society, chiefs perform a number of roles including military, religious, judicial, administrative, economic and cultural functions. They were also sole custodians of stool lands and agents of development. Indeed, it has been indicated that chiefs played important roles in the struggle against colonial rule (Odotei, 2006). On the arrival of the Europeans, their first contact was with chiefs bedecked with gold ornaments. The chiefs signed various agreements with the Europeans for land to build forts, castles and trading centres spread across the coastal towns. During the colonial rule, chiefs were at the forefront of colonial administration. They were partners in the lucrative trade in gold, slaves and other communities creating the conditions for the commercial activities that defined the Ghanaian economy from the 15th century through the 19th century (Odotei, 2006). Chieftaincy is a term derived from the word chief. The term chieftaincy was used to mean the institution through which the system of African traditional rule was administered. The colonialists introduced the European and eventually the Westminster form of government as an improvement on what they found already existing in the Gold Coast. Both have existed side by side and
simultaneously practiced up to now (Brobbey, 2012). Chieftaincy is now perceived as anachronistic. This post-independence view is informed by emergence of modern political ideologies. This notwithstanding, chieftaincy has since come to gain much prominence in the political and social lives of Ghanaians (Abotchie, 2006).

According to the 1992 constitution, a "chief" means a person, who, hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or queen mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage. Article 270 of the same constitution states that, the institution of chieftaincy, together with its traditional councils as established by customary law and usage, is hereby guaranteed. Parliament shall have no power to enact any law which - (a) confers on any person or authority the right to accord or withdraw recognition to or from a chief for any purpose whatsoever; or (b) in any way detracts or derogates from the honour and dignity of the institution of chieftaincy. Nothing in or done under the authority of any law shall be held to be inconsistent with, or in contravention of, clause (1) or (2) of this article if the law makes provision for- (a) the determination, in accordance with the appropriate customary law and usage, by a traditional council, a Regional House of Chiefs or a Chieftaincy Committee of any of them, of the validity of the nomination, election, selection, installation or deposition of a person as a chief; (b) a traditional council or a Regional House of Chiefs or the National House of Chiefs to establish and operate a procedure for the registration of chiefs and the public notification in the Gazette or otherwise of the status of persons as chiefs in Ghana. The following paragraphs of the constitution describe the basis of appointment of a chief, Article 275 of the 1992 constitution states thus; “A person shall not be qualified as a chief if he has been convicted for high treason, high crime or for an offence involving the security of the State, fraud, dishonesty or moral turpitude.” Also article 276 states that, “A chief shall not take part in active party politics; and any chief wishing to do so and seeking election to parliament shall abdicate his stool or skin.”

3. Theoretical Literature:

3.1. The Human Factor Theory:

The human factor (HF) theory is an emerging theory of peace-building and socio-economic development. The theory was propounded by SenyoAdjibolosoo in 1995. According to the
theory, HF is the spectrum of personality characteristics and other dimensions of human performance that enable social, economic and political institutions to function and remain functional over time, and such human characteristics and dimensions sustain the workings and application of the rule of law, political harmony, a disciplined labour force, a just legal system, respect for human dignity (rights) and the sanctity of life (Adjibolosoo 1995:33). The personality traits that enhance human performance in all spheres of life include integrity, responsibility, trustworthiness, commitment, selflessness, truthfulness, loyalty and discipline. Others are love, tolerance, sharing, wisdom and imagination. It is noted that not all women have exhibited these values, just as not all men have them. However, the social construction of gender and differentiated gender roles have generally socialised women to assume these values, while men are generally socialised to assume the opposite (Adjibolosoo 1995).

Similarly, the HF theory holds that there are six broad dimensions of human performance and these include spiritual capital (knowledge of and connection to the laws of the universe); moral capital (sense of right or wrong); aesthetic capital (sense of beauty and ugliness); human capital (knowledge and skills); human abilities (competences) and human potential (dormant talents or untapped part of Being). These personality traits and dimensions of human performance are second to none in attainment of the development aspirations of any society (Adjibolosoo 1999 & Owusu-Ampomah 2003). Neglecting them in any development paradigm, planning or implementation process is a recipe for failure. As Owusu-Ampomah (2003: 66) further puts it, without the HF, the quest for sustainable human development is a wild goose chase, as the human factor represents a paradigm shift that places premium on human values and positive qualities, not capital, institutions or policies. According to Adjibolosoo (1999:62), human factor decay is the primary cause of the socio-economic, political and educational problems of all societies. In other words, negative human factor traits and dimensions are a source of underdevelopment, socio-political disorder and conflict, while positive human factor traits and dimensions are a necessary and sufficient condition for good governance, sustained economic growth, human-centred development and peace building.

The significance of the HF paradigm is that, beyond the human security and human rights approaches to development, the quality of people who can make peace and development possible also matters. In other words, there is the need to focus on the character traits and human dimensions of people who are more likely to make peace and development happen, and appropriate their services accordingly. According to Adjibolosoo (1995), positive HF
qualities such as integrity, accountability, selflessness and truthfulness can create a fertile environment for good governance, development and peace building. Also, Lederach (2005) sees relatedness, collaboration, love, empathy and tolerance as necessary and sufficient factors for creating a fertile environment for peacebuilding. According to him, the capacity to imagine and generate constructive responses and initiatives associated with the daily challenges of violence can serve to transcend and ultimately break the grips of those destructive patterns and cycles within which conflict is perpetuated (Lederach 2005:29). Therefore, just as armed conflict takes place within a political context, there is also a political dimension of peace-making which requires a kind of politics that is crucial for conflict transformation. This is the politics of responsibility, accountability, tolerance, empathy, accommodation, love, truth-telling and forgiveness, all hallmarks of Lederach’s moral imagination model of peacebuilding and the HF paradigm. Certainly, in an African context, both the HF and Lederach’s model of peacebuilding resonate well with the Ghanaian worldview.

3.2. Empirical Literature:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author / Date</th>
<th>Purpose / Method</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Research Gap</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A study conducted by Brahnam et al. (2005) in Mid-Western University</td>
<td>The study aim at comparing conflict resolution strategies of males and females, in order to determine if gender-based differences exist. Both ANOVA and t-test analyses were utilized to investigate the relationship between gender and conflict resolution style.</td>
<td>The results showed that an individual's gender may be related to the development of conflict resolution styles. These findings also support the premise that females are highly adapted with regard to their ability to work collaboratively (and thereby successfully) in situations where conflict is likely to occur.</td>
<td>The authors never described a conceptual framework, the absence which detracts the significance of the work.</td>
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<td>A similar study conducted by McGadney-Douglass &amp; Ahadzie (2008) in</td>
<td>The study aim at assessing the statues of Displaced Women in Northern Results of the study showed that, some women use the strategy of denial of sexual gratification, waving their underwear at combatants,</td>
<td></td>
<td>This study had limitations regarding the verification of</td>
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Ghana. Indigenous Knowledge About Ethnic Conflict, a qualitative technique was used. believing that the combatants would be cursed if they refused to stop fighting after seeing such exhibitions, some prominent women, including elderly women, first wives of chiefs, mothers of chiefs, and wives of youth leaders equally interceded as well as “pillow talks” which were appeals to husbands’ better sense of judgment during the sleeping time, usually at predawn hours as interventions for the husbands to stop fighting. The information provided by the respondents, selection bias, and potentially unknown problems associated with limited literacy and cultural isolation.

Another study conducted by Omotayo (2001) in Nigeria. The study assessed the role of women in conflict resolution in the new information age, using a qualitative approach. The results showed that women were central in provision and dissemination of useful and accurate information on peace and peace movements, women groups were fighting for freedom of access to information; improving the reading habits of women and children; organizing exhibitions and talks on peace and ensuring life-long education for women and girls. Despite the many positive aspects of qualitative research, studies continue to be criticized for their lack of objectivity and generalizability.

According to Ntahobari & Ndayiziga, (2003) in Burundi. The study assesses women’s role in consolidating peace pacts in traditional Africa. The results showed that in situations of armed conflict, causing the murder of a clan member, a female mediator was quickly sent to the family of the victim, if mediation was effective, a meeting was called to “break a string of bead.” The study is limited on grounds of using personal interviews characterized with higher probability of providing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A study conducted by United States Institute of Peace (2011) in Kabul, Afghanistan.</td>
<td>The study discusses the traditional dispute resolution and women’s rights, using a quantitative approach.</td>
<td>Results of the study showed that about 80% of all disputes in Afghanistan are resolved through the traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. However, most women groups in Afghanistan oppose the traditional dispute resolution because it excludes women participation and issue decisions that violate women’s rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A study conducted by Mathey et al. (2003) in the Central African Republic (CAR).</td>
<td>The study explored the role played by women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, using a qualitative method.</td>
<td>The study showed that a fundamental fact of traditional CAR was the sacred character of the respect given to an elderly woman. That in terms of conflict, oldest women from the clan meet the opposing clan, interpose themselves between the fighters, in other to make them see reason. When words proved fruitless, the women will threaten to go naked or go on their knees. In either case, the gesture signified a curse for those who bore responsibility for such grave</td>
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In a similar vein, Mohamed, (2003) conducted a study in Somalia. The study explained the role of Somali women in the search for peace, using a qualitative technique. The results showed that some women poets in Somalia used their art to negotiate for peace. The work lacks adequate information to permit replication of the study.

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<th>Table 1</th>
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### 4. Methodology:

The research philosophy of the study epistemologically reflects the interpretivists’ perspectives of what constitutes an acceptable knowledge. In this context, the focus of the researcher centred on interpreting and gaining understanding of the world view and critical roles of the queen mothers as peace ambassadors in the Ga traditional areas of Accra. Ontologically the researcher subscribed to the subjectivism’s paradigm. A paradigm that explains that social phenomenon like conflict is created from the perceptions and consequent actions of the social actors concerned. In line with above research philosophy, the study adopted a qualitative approach for the study. This explained why the researcher engaged the queen mothers in interviews with the aim of gaining understanding of their traditional approaches to conflict resolution. A cross sectional study, both primary and secondary sources of data were used. The population of interest for was defined as all queen mothers who used the traditional approach to resolve conflicts in their jurisdictions. The researcher used a small sample size of five due to the fact that, respondents happens to be a homogeneous population, sharing common characteristics. The researcher used a mixed of non-probability sampling techniques namely; purposive, convenience and snowball sampling to select and interview the respondents.

After the review of relevant documents, in-depth interviews, taking of field notes and voice recordings of the interviews, the researcher transcribed and further translated the recordings into English language. Folders, files and cabins were used to put together materials of similar themes. This was closely followed with editing thus; removing responses forced in by the research subjects or poorly transcribed and translated portions. Data were coded thus; classified or categorized individual pieces together coupled with some easy retrieval methods.
to avoid data being lost. The researcher equally resorted to take notes of reminder as to what is meant by certain terms and words being used to provide building blocks for a certain amount of reflections and clarity in the work. The researcher adopted a second reading or proof reading strategy, which made it possible to make follow up calls, fill necessary gaps and effected possible corrections on the information so collected from the field before analysis. These processes assisted in reducing possible margins of error in the work. Once editing was done, data was analysed manually, using thematic analysis techniques to ensure ease in understanding of results.

In order to ensure an ethically sound research process and taking into consideration the sacred nature of the chieftaincy institution in Ghana, the researcher considered and secured the following: access and acceptance, informed consent, trust and confidentiality. For access and acceptance the queen mothers were informed about the intended study, and permission was granted to proceed. It was however agreed that before commencement, a formal letter be written to the palaces to formally request access to the queen mothers. Indeed, formal letters were written to the palaces.

5. Results And Discussions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Traditional Area</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naa Kotei Tsoo Afrasomanso I</td>
<td>Queen mother of Koteiman. She comes from the Asere Dzoshi clan. She has been a queen mother for 12 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naa Korkor Adjieoyi I</td>
<td>Queen mother of Adabraka Atukpai. She has been a queen mother for 16 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naana Barleki I</td>
<td>Paramount queen mother of Ada traditional area. She has been a queen mother for 16 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naana Adede Akrofi I</td>
<td>Queen mother of Ada Amlakpo Traditional Area. She has been a queen mother for 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naa Ayikaile Nobin I</td>
<td>Paramount queen mother of Gbese. First queen mother of Gbese and has been queen mother for 15 years.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Fieldwork, 2014

*Table 1: The Five (5) Queen Mothers Interviewed*

In a question to ascertain the occurrence of traditional conflicts in the study area, there was a unanimous acceptance from the queen mothers that “there is no society without conflict, hence traditional conflicts do occur in our society.” This unanimous agreement of existence
of conflict in the study area justify the universality and endemic nature of conflict in human society as explained by Marxian Conflict Theory propounded in the 1960s.

In a follow up question to document the types and forms of conflict characterizing the communities in the traditional area, a queen mother said, “here we experience individual conflicts, group conflicts and sometimes communal conflicts.” She however admitted that the most frequent ones are the individual and group types. The communal conflicts rarely occur. The types of conflict identified by the study are supported in the work of Peters (2006), he explained that conflict situation may arise among individuals, among groups or countries, but the hardly occurred ones are the inter-country types of conflicts.

In a further question to understand the various causes of traditional conflict in the study area, respondents collectively identify and mention the following causes:

here we experience land related conflict, marital conflict, rivalry related conflicts in polygamous homes and child labour protestations. Other types of conflict include petty quarrels, petty stealing, infidelity, greed, selfishness, hatred back biting, envy, petty gossips, unhealthy competitions, and irresponsible parenthood. Landlords vs tenants, lack of understanding among people living in compound houses and Poverty, sometimes men complain that their spouses refuse to go to bed with them. For chieftaincy, after a chief has been installed, another person comes to lobby because he has money and this creates conflicts.

The above result on causes of conflict in the study area, as captured in the study are in line with similar causes mentioned in the work of Osei - Hwedie (2012), who cited causes of local conflict in areas of politics, economic, land, chieftaincy, greed, ego-related problems, injustices, unequal distribution of local or community resources and plain mischief.

Another queen mother said this to buttress some of the earlier points that:

marital disputes are as a result of irresponsible fathers, in Ada for example, women are very hardworking, and because of that some of the men do not look after their children, and so the children are abandoned. Most of the men also like polygamous marriages, a major cause of marital conflicts. Sometimes the men send the children to Akosombo for fishing which is very sad.
The researcher wanted to explore the effects that traditional conflict has on social life in the various traditional areas. In this regard, some queen mothers said, “conflict does not bring about peace and progress in human life.” In the same regard, other queen mothers said, “no peace, no progress and it is the women and children who suffer most in conflict situations.” Mohamed (2003) also argued in this direction that, women are more vulnerable than men when society collapses, and that in times of armed conflicts, women and children often are the overwhelming victims of rape, sexual slavery, child soldiers and other forms of sexual violence.

In another question to ascertain how the queen mothers source information on occurrences of conflicts in their communities; it was unanimous that “the victims of conflicts come to our respective palaces to lodge complaints.” This implies that queen mothers have become known and a well-established conflict resolution institution in the study areas. This is buttressed by a case narrated by one of the queen mothers as:

*The people themselves bring the cases to us. There was an instance where a lady cursed her co-female tenants because those ladies always mocked her of being a prostitute. However on a particular day, the ladies did not laugh at her so when she cursed them, the curse bounced back to her and afterwards she started behaving abnormally. Then, somebody suggested that they send the matter to the palace. Libation and prayers were said for her and the traditional priestess was invited to perform some rituals. Prayers were said for her according to tradition and the curse was revoked.*

The researcher also made an interesting observation in an area of ‘gender differences’ in conflict resolution roles between the chiefs and the queen mothers. It was clear that chiefs in the study areas played key roles in resolving conflicts involving chieftaincy and land issues. The queen mothers on the other hand participate in resolving conflicts in polygamous marriages, child labour, indebtedness and petty quarrels. It became clear from this binary conflict role categorization that, the chiefs handle ‘macro’ conflict issues such as land and chieftaincy while the queen mothers handle ‘micro’ conflict issues such as gossips and envy. This observation goes to confirm the assumptions of the patriarchal theory that around the
world, gender is the primary division between people, that society sets up barriers to provide unequal access to power, property and prestige on the basis of sex and consequently, sociologists classify females as minority and marginalized group (Henslin, 2002). This notwithstanding, the study showed that majority of the conflict resolution roles are performed by the queen mothers in the study area. This justifies the significant and centrality of women in mediating conflict due to their good human relations with others using their innate qualities of affinity, affection, love and coax which have made them useful modules for conflict resolution (Perkins, 2008; Ntahobari & Ndayiziga, 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Queen mothers</th>
<th>Chiefs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rivalry related conflicts in polygamous homes</td>
<td>Land disputes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child labour protestation cases</td>
<td>Chieftaincy related conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty quarrels, infidelity and rape cases</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding among people living in</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compound houses</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes men complain that their spouses refuse</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to bed with them</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gossips, envy, hatred</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indebtedness and Landlords vs. tenants</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, 2014

**Table 2: Gender Differences in Conflict Resolution Roles**

In a question to establish the various processes and procedures used by the queen mothers in resolving conflicts, it came out that, the queen mothers first and foremost constituted a panel of mediators, chaired by her. She chairs the panel on grounds that the institution of chieftaincy elevates her high to occupy such positions of power and prestige in socio-political and cultural space and at the apex of traditional leadership is the chief and the queen mother (Odotei & Awedoba, 2006).

A queen mother said:

*when someone comes to summon somebody, the person pays 50 Ghana Cedis called ‘tako’ or ‘nle’ with a bottle of schnapps. I give part of the money to the asafo group and part to the panel who will sit on the matter. this is called ‘abaakplesei’*. The asafo group goes to the person’s house, holding the staff of the linguist to show that the
case is a serious one. I hardly send with the linguist staff, unless of course the case is serious. Then the accused person and his group will follow.

Another queen mother said:

*Whenever there is a case, I invited the parties and try to identify the main interest in the conflict. If it bothers on infidelity, I try to identify whether the man is unfaithful or not. After the two narrate I try to find out from the man’s point of view if it is a hearsay that unfaithful as her wife has reported. I try to reconcile them. I sometimes give them little refreshment. I ask the man to change his behavior and that if I hear that he continuous cheating on her wife, I will take him to WAJU. Then after two weeks, I will send from the palace and to check how things are going.*

In summing up the responses from the five queen mothers interviewed on processes and procedures, the following were documented: the complainant brings a bottle of schnapps and some money. The plaintiff is served with a summons to appear on a fixed date for hearing at the palace. A panel is constituted, an elderly family member pours libation. The linguist then tells the house their mission. The two parties narrate their sides of the story in turns, starting with the complainant. The panel listens and interrogates both sides. Their respective witnesses are called to testify. In consultation with the panel members, the queen mother who doubles as the chairperson of the panel, pronounce judgement, and if found guilty, appropriate sanctions may be applied.

In a question aimed at establishing the conflict resolution mechanisms put in place by the queen mothers in resolving traditional conflicts in the area, the results showed that the alternative dispute resolution method (ADR) was widely used. They said they were being trained and have acquired some skills and core competencies in resolving traditional conflicts using ADR. The training according to them was organized by the West African Dispute Resolution Centre (WADREC). One queen mother said “the ADR provides a healthier and faster method for resolving disputes.” Indeed the ADR method seeks to maintain and preserve the traditional relationship among disputing parties. Another retorted “in fact ADR is very effective and helps us to solve cases fast.” Respondents further lauded the use of ADR on
grounds that in matters of litigation ADR gives the parties the satisfaction of having been heard and contributed to a mutually beneficial outcome. It also encourages parties to voluntarily comply with agreed terms of settlements. ADR further promotes law and order in traditional society. ADR is fast, effective, makes conflict resolution easy and it adopts a win-win approach. The win-win approach being adopted by the queen mothers in resolving conflicts in the area supports the assumptions of the human factor theory propounded by Adjibolosoo (1995). The theory emphasizes on positive human qualities such as integrity, accountability, selflessness and truthfulness as ingredients for creating a fertile environment for good governance, development and peace building. Also, the win-win approach adopted by the queen mothers is in line with the dictates of constructive conflict management styles characterized by cooperation, mutual respect and a desire to learn from and to protect others (Mathey et al. 2003). Again, the research questions addressed by the study were related to conflict handling attributes exhibited by the queen mothers and the possible influence that gender might have on any possible resulting behaviours. The research results showed that the queen mothers in the study areas are better at handling conflict. As noted above, women in the general population often exhibited a preference for accommodation and an aversion for the competitive style of resolving conflicts.

6. Conclusion:

The institution of Chieftaincy, a traditional institution with pre-colonial roots not only continues to occupy socio-political and cultural space, it also remains an important institution of traditional governance in contemporary Ghana. An analysis done on the Ga-traditional areas in 2011 indicated a high number of social disputes including those related to chieftaincy, land, stealing, marital, hatred and unhealthy competition. The activities of the traditional leaders mainly, the head of families, ‘wekuonukpa or nokotoma’ and their elders in managing the stool, family lands and other stool resources are worrying factors. It is against this background that this work sets to explore the role of queen mothers in traditional conflict resolution among the Ga-traditional areas. There was a unanimous response from the queen mothers that, there is no society without conflict, hence traditional conflicts do exist in their respective societies, therefore the universality and endemic nature of conflict in society is confirmed. Types of conflict identified in the study are; individual conflicts, group conflicts and sometimes communal conflict. Causes of traditional conflicts in the study area
as established from the work include; land related conflicts, rivalry related conflicts in polygamous homes and child labour protestations. Other types of conflicts are petty quarrels, petty stealing, infidelity, greed, selfishness, hatred back biting, envy, petty gossips, unhealthy competitions, and irresponsible parenthood, land lords vs. tenants. Lack of understanding among people living in compound houses, poverty and unemployment, sometimes men complain that their spouses refuse them sex and lots of chieftaincy conflicts whereby after a chief has been installed, another person comes to lobby because he has money and this creates conflicts. The effects of traditional conflicts are; the people believed that conflict situations affect socio-economic development of the area. Also, those conflicts bothering on marital and divorce lead to high incidence of single parents, a phenomenon that affect women and children badly. The findings further showed that the queen mothers source information on occurrences of conflicts in their communities, through self-reporting by victims of conflict in the area. Issues of ‘gender differences’ in conflict resolution roles between the chiefs and the queen mothers emerged. This notwithstanding, the study showed that majority of the conflict resolution roles are performed by the queen mothers. This justifies the significant and centrality of women in mediating conflict due to their good human relations with others using their innate qualities of affinity, affection, love and coax which have made them useful modules for conflict resolution. The various processes and procedures used by the queen mothers in resolving conflicts were effective. The work revealed that the alternative dispute resolution method (ADR) was widely used and adopted in resolving traditional conflict in the area.
References


